

Words and Pictures By Lorraine Viade, Psy.D.



Words and Pictures is a charming yet serious banter session between Clive Owen who seems to get better with age and Juliette Binoche who brings a mature sensibility to the role of an artist whose love of painting is hampered by physical pain. The two play professors at the same prep school whose differing views about life and love inspire their students and each other. The competition that ensues causes them to make significant movement within their own lives. I liked this movie because it showed how people can change and how what we see, and how we see it is just as important as what we say and why we say it. The message is clear that expression in any form is essential to the evolution of the human condition and the human heart.

The artist and the writer pitted against one another, trying to prove something that doesn't need proving. *Words and Pictures* in harmony need no explanation or translation. When you read a moving piece of literature or a poem you form a picture in your mind. When you gaze at a classic painting for the first time, it is like falling in love—you may be left speechless. You can become engulfed in emotion and something inside of you wants more. When you are affected by the work of another, the bond between you and them is powerful. In this case, the connection between a man and a woman who are flawed individually yet brave enough to risk the falling together is delightful to watch.

Owen and Binoche generate a seasoned chemistry. This isn't the chemical romance that we come to expect from movies. Theirs is a match made in the open forum of higher education. A more cerebral courtship develops. They learn and they teach. They overcome and reach out. Life affords us few opportunities to be so vulnerable. In art and in writing, souls are bared for all to see and to feel. We see in the work of others what speaks to us and we cherish the effects. That is why words are just as important as pictures. Both are languages. They are expressions of the essence of who we are. They bring us joy and show us pain.

The movie is also about addiction, estrangement and recovery. The couple relates because they share the common language of suffering. They have overcome obstacles and the inevitable bumps along the journey. They learn not to take everything so seriously. Not even love. *Words and Pictures* is a nice way to spend the afternoon with some veteran actors who

are comfortable in their own skins. I give *Words and Pictures* three blank canvases because every picture tells another story.

